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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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SUBJECT: EFCC CHAIR RIBADU SENT BACK TO SCHOOL?

REF: ABUJA 2203

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Heather Merritt for reasons 1
.4. (b & d).

1. (C) Summary: Nuhu Ribadu, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has been assigned to a one year course at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS). Speculation abounds that Ribadu's one year "study leave" is designed to remove him from the helm of the EFCC before the expiry of his four year term in April 2011. However, the Inspector General of Police claims that Ribadu was selected for the NIPSS course based on seniority. Ribadu is on loan to the EFCC from the Nigerian Police Force, where he was promoted to Assistant Inspector General in April 2007. He has been at the helm of the EFCC since 2003. The EFCC has yet to comment on the changing of the guard, though EFCC Secretary Emmanuel Akomaye confirms that he will be taking over as acting Chairman of the institution. Though it is possible that it is simply Ribadu's turn to attend a relatively prestigious training course, it seems likely that his agency's vigor in investigating powerful people had some impact on the timing of his NIPSS assignment. End Summary.

2. (C) Nigeria's Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mike Okiro announced at an Abuja press conference December 27 that Nuhu Ribadu, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has been selected to attend a one year course at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS). Okiro said that attendance at NIPSS was "routine for senior officers" and that sending Ribadu to the course would be good for him and for the police force. The EFCC has not yet publicly commented on Ribadu's new assignment. According to colleagues from the British High Commission, Emmanuel Akomaye, the EFCC Secretary (effectively Ribadu's #2), confirmed December 28 that he will be taking over soon as acting EFCC Chairman and said that had known Ribadu was going to NIPSS for "some time."

3. (U) NIPSS is a Nigerian government training institution roughly equivalent to a U.S. war college (reftel). Sixty senior military officials and civil servants are chosen each year to attend a 10-month training course at the institute. Alumni of NIPSS include the current Sultan of Sokoto, several former heads of state, and numerous ministers and other high ranking officials.

4. (U) Nuhu Ribadu came to the EFCC from the Nigerian Police Force, where he holds the rank of Assistant Inspector

General. Though Ribadu remains a police officer, he has independent statutory powers as Chairman of the EFCC, so it is not clear whether the IGP, though technically his commanding officer, can simply reassign him to NIPSS like any other member of the police force. Ribadu has been at the helm of the EFCC since 2003, and he was re-appointed as EFCC Chairman by former President Obasanjo in April 2007. The EFCC Act (2004) grants him a four-year term of office, unless he is removed by the President for inability to discharge his office, incompetence, or "if the President is satisfied that it is not in the interest of the Commission or the public" that he should remain in office.

15. (C) Comment: Most press accounts speculate that Ribadu is being sent to NIPSS now in order to remove him prematurely from the EFCC, perhaps due to ongoing institutional battles between the EFCC and the Attorney General on actions against former governors. The EFCC has been active in recent weeks, jailing former Governors Ibori (Delta State) and Fayose (Ekiti State) pending trials, investigating allegations of corruption against Senator Iyabo Obasanjo (daughter of the ex-President), and reportedly preparing to indict another four ex-governors soon. Though it is possible that it is simply Ribadu's turn to attend a relatively prestigious training course, it seems likely that his agency's vigor in investigating powerful people had some impact on the timing of his NIPSS assignment. Embassy has already requested an anytime meeting for Ambassador with Ribadu and has calls in to the Foreign Minister and for the President, though both are out of Abuja at their respective villages. End Comment.

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